

# My Life to a China Orange

By: John Leonard

Ahem

A muscle was twitching...half-moon shoulder blades  
The feeling of your left thigh in the dark,  
scarred from a Roman candle

4th of July, when your twin sister chased you through a field  
until it was almost time for supper

Iced windows on a railcar, palm prints of children

(not all were runaways)

There was heavy baggage overhead  
or rain in the forecast,  
and the way you always spoke of it,  
like a dark stranger plotting...

Acreage meant the oldness of dirt  
Tax man dead in a run off ditch,  
the apple trees applauding

Now, a radio program murmurs in my neighbors shed,  
pregnant light glowing from  
one wasp dug hole in the wood and bleeding

from another

(It's easier just to agree)

Place your hands on the table, smear your palms  
with salt and honey, and think about a mother, a mushroom cloud,  
or the hop heads of Fountain Square

We're breaking into lists now:

1. A list This list Thermopylae Lost (a misspelled list)

Shopping list...wood chips...avocado...mascara

Where is the red paint, so I can make more lists?

Carvings on the concrete walls of a parking garage

Listen to the crickets while I scare some strangers.

2. Coffee stains on the windowsill...never mind...

One spring, a short man stood in my driveway

for 20 minutes,

staring at a pendulum in the sky

3. "Rebecca, get off the roof!"

Opaque ice covered the ladder rungs while

she had one or two dances with the chimney smoke

And a blue light was flashing two towns away

It's always easy to slip

Iron in the fire, pomegranates,

the flesh, the fruit

Just imagine the taste

That's enough of that.

Forward, into the next thing

Maybe a favor, maybe something that breaks me

(But not me)

Hollow buildings sleep through the winter,

cold trees whimper forgotten shopping carts

You are probably milling around the market,

in love with love, a fruit fly on a lemon

Nursery rhymes circling in your head

My heart caves in like a pumpkin through the windshield

of a double parked car, on the day after Halloween

We all know our fate, so it isn't fate

But who will wake me when you're gone?

(But again, not me)  
Instead of me, a crystal statue of me  
A mirror where I once stood,  
that nobody will cover with oil soaked rags,  
on the day I say goodbye

(Calm seas make shit sailors)

Oh, get over it! Touch a copper pipe!

Rearrange the furniture!

Make another list and add a sub-  
list

4. Outrage, nonsense, old film cluttered  
in a film storage warehouse

\*Laughter\*

Break lights, wine cellars, a very important question;  
"Would you raise show rabbits me with?"

Monsters, raked flesh, the night manager in a body bag

(You don't have any clue where this is heading)

- 4.1. A fox was watching me run through the woods  
(and this time it was me)

Small trailer wrapped in vines, a good place to hide whiskey  
The feeling of being 17 at noon on June 23rd, 2008

My arms were covered in scratches...black berry thorns  
You heard a sad song and called me

We watched the sunset like people tend to do  
Light slowly melting into darkness  
deep russet and jagged at the edges,  
like a mountain of coffee grinds and eggplant skins  
Bone marrow being slowly raptured into the sea

See?

(This sub-list isn't working)

Imagine these words as a line drawn in the sand  
Pretend you're a bird bath besieged by squirrels.

Anyways...

I'll tell you this much,

that cotton dress you wrapped yourself in...

and it still hurts  
like watching a stone pillar fall  
on a childhood pet

All my father left behind was a sock full of quarters,  
The laundromat with the pool table closed down (by the way)

When they found those kids in the dumpster behind Troy's...  
Rust belt violence, like a flock of ospreys burning through the night

Our gang stole away for a last hurrah and realized  
the journey was already over My brother,  
he sat on a tree stump and flicked ashes at the sky

The best advice he ever gave me –  
"You can always find liquor in a cemetery"

Some of the others became statues too early, cloistered in their poverty  
Years later, frozen in the parking lot,  
waiting for ghosts

I think I'm failing  
We're all failing  
to define

Moving on, anyone would tell you, is like facing down a three headed alligator  
or  
having no other choice but to swallow a mouthful of Asian hornets

There's no shame in folding guest towels that might never be used.  
There's no shame in being the only lemming to survive the fall.

Despite what you may hear, sometimes just showing up is enough.

So throw me out of the window,  
pour me out with the wash  
Let me fall  
Let me fall

(Slow tear sliding down your cheek)

Driving to work this morning,  
and there was just enough sunlight  
to see a hubcap careen off a Buick and  
barely miss crushing a wild daisy

Ain't that something?